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ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS: ENVIRONMENT

Statement submitted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

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WATER: THE MEANS REQUIRED TO PRESERVE, MANAGE AND MAKE THE BEST USE OF THIS ESSENTIAL RESOURCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Resolution unanimously adopted by the 100th Inter-Parliamentary Conference*
(Moscow, 11 September 1998)

The 100th Inter-Parliamentary Conference,

Aware that water is one of the basic elements of life and the most important constituent of the human diet,

Also aware that freshwater resources are essential to basic human needs, health, food production and the preservation of ecosystems,

Mindful that water is one of the most important natural resources and one that will determine future prosperity and stability,

Concerned that potential water shortages increase the possibility that water will be used as a strategic threat and encourage that tendency,

Deeply concerned at the growing threat to water arising from a large number of natural and anthropogenic factors, the latter involving basic processes that result in pollution and shortages and often go hand in hand with wastefulness of the kind that occurs in households and some traditional agricultural methods,

Deeply concerned at the pollution of global water resources and the deterioration in their quality that have continued unabated for years, and at the growth in water consumption and use around the world which is aggravating water shortages in a number of regions,

Aware that many countries have neither the resources nor the capacity to collect, manage and analyse data necessary for planning sustainable water management, and lack the capacity to develop, monitor and enforce water management policies,

Noting that, although water problems occur in specific locations and regions, they are in fact global problems in that their frequency, magnitude, and potential effects are increasing rapidly,

Recognising the need for action to prevent water from becoming a factor limiting sustainable development,

Recalling the WHO "Guidelines for Drinking-Water Quality", and *taking into account* the results of important conferences that have dealt with the issue of water, for example the United

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* The Conference is the principal statutory body of the Inter-Parliamentary Union whose membership currently comprises 138 national parliaments as well as five regional parliamentary assemblies.

Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), the International Conference on Water and Environment (Dublin, 1992), the International Forum « Global Water Politics: Co-operation for Transboundary Water Management » (Bonn, 1998), the Expert Group Meeting on Strategic Approaches to Freshwater Management (Harare, 1998), the Ministerial Meeting on Water Resources and Sustainable Development (Paris, 1998) and the Sixth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (New York, 1998),

Mindful of the resolution on environment and development adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union at the 87th Inter-Parliamentary Conference,

Requests and recommends to governments and parliaments:

1. to rapidly initiate co-ordinated and comprehensive international action by, *inter alia*, WHO, FAO, UNEP, HABITAT and other relevant United Nations organisations to ensure access to potable water, especially by vulnerable groups such as women and children, and to develop sustainable strategies for water use in view of the fact that more than a fifth of the world's population have no access to safe supplies of potable water and more than half have no proper sanitary facilities;

2. to implement globally valid minimum standards for the basic supply of potable water and water-related sanitation services to individuals;

3. to agree on international principles of equity regarding access to freshwater resources and, in the case of riparian States, to co-operate on matters relating to international watercourses, whether transboundary or boundary;

4. to take steps to conserve and protect aquatic ecosystems, recognising the important role of and interaction between groundwater, lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, estuaries, the marine environment, vegetation, and in general the links between surface and air processes, at national and international level;

5. through international co-operation, including financial aid, to support research, access to reliable data, the transfer of technology and capacity-building (human, technical and institutional) aimed at appropriate, affordable and environmentally sound solutions to water resource and management problems;

6. to promote the development of alternative methods of supply water, such as purification, desalination and the efficient and safe use of untreated water, and to investigate the feasibility of novel ideas for this purpose;

7. to establish or improve legislative and regulatory frameworks that will facilitate integrated water resource management and encourage public and private investment in the water sector;

8. to take steps to ensure that each country adequately values its freshwater as both an economic and a social good through cost recovery;

9. to give priority to national water policies whose principles and programmes are consistent with the wishes of the national community;

10. to implement the commitments their country has made in regard to the protection of freshwater sources.

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